2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

173 them back to differences of origin. Everyone knows that all Namoos came originally from Mampurugu, how long ago nobody can tell. The tradition of Tongo, as it was related to me on many occasions, is as follows: The ancestor who founded Tongo was Mosuor. He was the Paramount Chief (*na'ab*) of Mampurugu, but had to flee the country after being vanquished in a fight for the chiefship. When he reached Tongo the Gbizug tendaana, Genat, was living there. Mosuor came to the house but found nobody there; for Tendaan Genat had seen him coming and had sought refuge in the nearby hills. Now, there is a watercourse a little distance off and there he found a shallow pit beside which stood a *kiŋkaŋ* (*Ficus*) tree which was shedding its leaves. A path led from this water-hole towards the Hills and someone had been carrying water which had spilled over on to this path. 'Thereupon', to quote the version of one of my Tongo informants, 'our ancestor said, "There is someone in these hills who comes to fetch water here". So he caused the dry fig leaves to be scattered on the path and went to hide quietly. In due course he saw Tendaan Genat stepping along the path, while the leaves crunched *kaya, kaya,* coming to fetch water. Thereupon our ancestor Mosuor, having seen him, caught him and asked him what he was afraid of. Why did he run away and hide? Genat replied that he had seen him wearing a gown and that there was something on his head all red, and fear took hold of him.[1] So Mosuor brought him back and asked, "Who owns this house?" He said that it was his house, and Mosuor brought him home thither and said that he himself would settle down here and Genat as well. He said that Genat would be his tendaana to carry out the sacrifices on his behalf.'

Gbizug elders told the story of Mosuor in much the same way but omitting the trick by which Mosuor caught their ancestor; adding that it was the horses and guns of Mosuor that inspired fear in Tendaan Genat.

173 608 They say, also, that having accepted Mosuor as a settler and having allotted land to him close beside his own homestead, he told Mosuor what were the taboos of the country (*tu ŋan-kiha*), and entered into a solemn pact of blood-brotherhood with him. They *ŋma pɔlɔŋ*, cut wrists. A cut was made on the wrist of each, and each licked the blood of the other. Thus '*ba leeba mabiih, ba leeba soog*, they became brethren, they became uterine brothers' and pledged themselves and their descendants to perpetual peace. This was a unique instance of blood-brotherhood, which is not practised in Taleland to-day.

● 773 According to this tradition, Tendaan Genat told Mosuor of his kinsmen, the Ba'at-Sakpar Tendaana, the Wakii Tendaana, the Degal tendaana, and the Ka'ar tendaana. These five were the original inhabitants of the country. They sprang from the Earth itself, say their descendants. At Gbizug they declare that Tendaan Genat's ancestor Bumbiogta'adug sprouted from the earth (*u bulme na*), he had no father or mother (*u ka ba u ka ma*). Pressed further they say, '*u yi Naawun zug sig na*—he descended from Heaven'. Heaven and Earth are one, they contend; they have the same mystical value. At Wakii they call their first

[292] [1] A red fez and a cloth tunic are the distinctive costume of chiefs of Mampuru origin. Tendaanas may not wear garments of cloth. They are ritually obliged to wear skins only. Chiefs and their clansmen may ride horses, tendaanas not.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

ancestor Tɛŋənbulɔg—Earth-begotten—and give the same myth of his origin. The people of Degal and of Ka'ar attribute a similar origin to their first ancestors. Tɛndaan Gɛnɔt is said to have begotten Dagbeog (Bearded man) whose descendants are the Gbeog people, who are therefore a 'brother' lineage to Gbizug (=*Gbeog zug*, the upper part of Gbeog).

One of Gɛnɔt's 'brothers'—the exact genealogical relationship is regarded as of no consequence, some describing him as *soog* (uterine kinsman), others as *pit* (younger brother)—was Daziug (Red man), a hunter who founded the Ba'at-Sakpar line; and another 'brother' of his founded one of the Zubiuŋ lineages. Indeed all the primordial tɛndaanas were 'brothers' in a more general sense, the concepts of kinship serving here consciously to identify them with one another.

These myths, meagre as they appear, are laid down with a finality of conviction that makes any question of their historical truthfulness irrelevant.

Most of the Hill Talis are also alleged to have been immigrants originally who arrived to find the Degal Tɛndaana living on top of the hills. But their myths of origin are as deficient in circumstantial detail as those of the primordial tɛndaanas. Thus candid people at Yinduuri said complacently: 'We don't know, it is said that our ancestor came from Tampɔlɔŋ in Mampurugu, but now we have all become Talis.' People of other clans told a vague story of an ancestor wandering about the uninhabited hills, sheltering in caves, until one day he observed the smoke of a fire. Going towards it he discovered the Degal tɛndaana, and later settled on the Hills. Gorogo is said to have been founded thus by Woolisi immigrants, Sii by Bulisi and Mamprusi, and some of the Tɛnzugu lineages by Mamprusi, Kusaasi, or Gɔrisi. The origins thus attributed to any community symbolize special ritual relationships with the areas they are alleged to have migrated from, which are still maintained.

All these myths of origin become intelligible when it is realized that they are nothing more than formulations of the contemporary scheme of political and ceremonial relationships. The Tallensi themselves are philosophers enough to appreciate this. Many Namoos, for example, privately view the myth of the primordial tɛndaanas with unaffected scorn. 'They lie', declared Saɣɔbazaa, a shrewd and respected elder of Tongo, himself a kinsman of the present[1] Gbizug tɛndaana. 'A human being can't emerge sprouting out of the earth. The rain falls, and the millet comes up, trees come up, grass comes up; but we have never seen a human being sprout up.' When I tried to defend the tɛndaanas, he countered triumphantly: 'And if their ancestor really sprouted up, why don't they let a person sprout again?' Then, with a sudden inspiration he proposed an explanation: 'Suppose you come and settle here and your children succeed you, and their children, and their children succeed and so on, and so on. Then, one day strangers come and ask your descendants whence they have sprung. Will they not say that their ancestor was begotten of the earth? We Namoos', he concluded, 'are immigrants (*kpeeha*) here.' This acute estimation of the myths gives a clue to their

[1] The present time throughout this book refers to the years 1934–7.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

178 formerly, and the social cleavages symbolized in this habit are no longer
184 so drastic as before. On the other hand, when the Golibdaana, in his overweening conceit, tried to copy the dress and the court procedure of
178 a Mampuru chief, there was wide indignation. The Chief of Tongo,
184 with whom he thus sought to equate himself, protested with such vigour
626 to the District Commissioner that the latter ordered the Golibdaana to stop his new practices. A man of enormous wealth and great power failed to get away with an innovation prepared with extravagant expense, because it ran counter to the politico-ritual structure of the society. He would never, incidentally, have dared to attempt this in former times, or, for that matter, have had the motive to do so. His behaviour is due to the arrogance of newly acquired wealth and power. But Tale institutions are still too strongly integrated to give way to such blatant subversion.

613 The notions of the continuity, persistence, and stability of their culture and social organization, so vital for the Tale outlook on life, have their roots in the lineage system. The whole social system of the Tallensi hinges on their lineage system with its religious counterpart, an elaborate ancestor cult. Unbroken continuity of descent, persistence of self-identical corporate units, stability of settlement—these are the intrinsic characteristics of the Tale lineage system. It requires the assumption, which the ancestor cult places beyond question, that the social structure of to-day is the same as it was in the past.

173 The Tallensi, therefore, have no history in the sense of a body of
773 authentic records of past events. The memories and reminiscences of
578 the old men are parts of their biographies and never contribute to the building up of a body of socially preserved history. Their myths and legends are one means of rationalizing and defining the structural relationships of group to group or the pattern of their institutions. Some of them have perhaps been built up around events which actually occurred and people who actually lived. It is, for example, quite probable that the Namoos actually came from Mampurugu originally, and that Mosuor really lived. The ancestor cult, the settled life, and the whole cultural idiom of the Tallensi lend support to such an inference, but there is no objective evidence. Tale myths and legends counterfeit history; they do not document it. They are a part of Tale social philosophy, projected into the past because the people think of their social order as continuous and persistent, handed down from generation to generation. A myth or a legend postulates a beginning for what has existed thus ever since. Even in our civilization naïve philosophers try to understand their society by similar devices. In the elaborately differentiated structure of Tale society there are regions of high tension where groups are coupled together in polar opposition and regions of low tension where the units of structure are articulated in complementary relations to one another. The myths epitomize the factors which differentiate one group from another. The greater the differentiation at any point the more elaborate is the legend. Hence we find the most definitive and conspicuous legend, that of Mosuor, associated with the relationship of greatest tension, that of the Namoos to the Talis. We find, also, that the emphasis of a myth is on the relationships which most precisely define the structural position

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

of the group to which it refers. Owing to the balanced distribution of political and ceremonial functions between units of structure, the members of a group always overrate their own relative significance while non-members underrate its importance. These, sometimes contradictory, valuations find expression, also, in the way myths are presented. It is the technique of contraposition coming to the surface again. When, therefore, in these days new tensions develop, erupting sometimes into open conflict, they are inevitably reflected in the cast given to their myths of origin by interested parties.

The Major Cleavage in Tale Society

Our reconnaissance of the cultural landscape of the Tallensi has left us with a tangle of facts which do not fall into an obvious pattern. The reader may rest assured that his perplexity bears no comparison to that of an ethnographer seeking, for the first time, to understand Tale culture and social organization. The perspective changes as the investigator shifts his vantage point. The greatest puzzle of all is why there is so little apparent unity and coherence in an area of such dense and close habitation, carrying a population that has been sedentary for a long time, has a more or less homogeneous culture, and a strong sense of the continuity and stability of its social order. Leaving aside this puzzle, for the present, let us see what are the positive conclusions to which our survey leads.

The point of primary importance is that a major cleavage runs through the whole of Tale society. On the one side stand communities or parts of communities the members of which are generally agreed to be the descendants of immigrant Mamprusi. These are the Namoos. On the other side stand similar social groups who claim to be and are accepted as the descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country and earlier immigrants whom they absorbed. This cleavage is given a symbolic formulation in myths of origin the historicity of which need not concern us.

This cleavage is so fundamental that it permeates the whole social outlook of the people. One sees it most vividly in the martial choruses chanted at important funerals. One of the high lights at the opening ceremonies of the funeral of an important person is a grand mimic war march (*dee*) of the men of the clan. In their finest clothes, weapons in hand, plumed helms on their heads, blowing whistles and accompanied by drummers, the men gather in lineage squadrons to march round the settlement, and eventually mass at the house of the funeral. They march irregularly in an unorganized mob with excited children trailing behind and women dancing on the flanks trilling the shrill *kpeləmət* cry of elation. And as they march, especially as they approach the funeral house, they chant defiant challenges against their traditional enemies in the wars of former days. 'Yo ho!' they chant, 'we might rise one day at break of dawn to sally forth against certain people.' 'Is it not because of us', the Namoos chant taunting the Talis, 'that you have water to drink?' And again, 'Do you not mock at them, do you not laugh at them?' And now and then a man leaps forward, crouches scowling, pretends to shoot off an arrow, and cries scornfully, 'If it were not for the white man, by now we would be meeting them in battle'. It is all play-acting, but there is an

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

We have noted that Tale culture is homogeneous. Thus the totemic taboos of the Tale Namoos and their characteristic funeral rites, distinctive as they are, are homologous in form and function with the totemic observances and funeral rites of non-Namoos. We shall see the evidence for this when we examine the more elaborate differentiation of Talis and other non-Namoo clans and lineages by totemic and other ritual observances. Tallensi know this and take it for granted, as they also take for granted variations in the ritual observances of different communities which are presumed to have identical ritual forms. They attribute such variations to the influence of neighbouring communities. In fact the homologous usages of neighbouring communities have features in common which do not occur among more widely separated clans with the same practices.

But the taboos of the first-born and the goatskin loin-cover of the dead are fixed and unalterable. All Tallensi know that these are the distinguishing *kiha* (sing. *kihɔr*)—literally, forbidden things, but meaning ritual injunctions as well as prohibitions—of all Namoos, 'from Dagbɔŋ to Mooga', as the natives say.

Namoos say that they observe these *kiha* 'because it is the custom of our ancestors (*ti yaab yɛl nla*)'. They require no other explanation, but accept such ritual observances as facts of immemorial antiquity and part of the fixed order of society. The taboo of the fowl is the only one of these observances for which a myth of origin exists, and this is typical of the Tale myths purporting to account for the origins of totemic avoidances, being apparently trivial in content and neutral in emotional tone. Considering the fluid form and content of such myths and the fact that they are never deliberately taught, this myth is remarkably consistent in outline among Namoo clans in Taleland.[1] Tallensi display no interest in the private myths of any social group other than their own, and therefore make no secret of these myths. Knowledge of them is not deemed to be a necessary condition of adherence to the tenets they enshrine. Most young Namoos and many older men, even those who have themselves to observe the fowl taboo—an onerous enough restriction in a society whose chief sacrificial animal is the fowl—are ignorant of or but hazily acquainted with the myth. The men who know it tell it without reticence.

Significance of the Totemic Taboos of the Namoos

The fowl taboo, Namoos say, came about because 'a fowl did a great service to our ancestor'. He had a wife, and people came to her with slander of her husband, trying thus to persuade her to leave him. This made her very unhappy. But one day a broody hen sitting in the woman's grinding room told her not to weep. When her husband returns from the farm she must prepare a drink of flour-water for him, said the fowl, and it would fly up and dash the calabash from his hand. If he then killed the fowl in anger the woman would know that he was a wicked man, and if he spared it she would know that people were slandering him maliciously. When the man came home, the plan was carried out. Far from injuring

[1] Different versions of the myth are found among Namoos outside Taleland, but the central theme is the same. All versions stress the point that the intervention of a fowl was responsible for the birth of the clan.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

the fowl. the man merely said, 'The fowl is thirsty'. Thus his wife knew that people had been deceiving her and she remained with him. Afterwards she bore a daughter, and vowed solemnly that her child should never eat fowl. Later a son followed, and the man declared that the boy too must refrain from eating fowl. That is why the first-born son and first-born daughter of all Namoos have the fowl avoidance; but later children may eat it, for if they, too, were prohibited, who would consume the fowls which men sacrifice to their ancestors?

If we bear in mind the enormous importance Tallensi attach to marriage and progeny, we can sympathize with the respect they pay to the common domestic fowl in return for this apparently trivial benefit conferred on their ancestor. Of course nobody knows or cares who this ancestor was, but it would not occur to anybody to doubt the truth of this tale. Every day some animal, domestic or wild, becomes a shrine (*bayər*), the symbol and medium of contact with the ancestor spirits, to some person or another in every Tale settlement; and the occasion of this ritual transformation of a commonplace creature is always a piece of good or ill fortune associated with it. Nor would the fact, admittedly contrary to ordinary experience, that a fowl broke into speech, disconcert the natives. They see no need for explaining away such incongruities, either by invoking the supernatural or by referring it to a fabulous age when animals possessed the power of speech. 'That is the story', they declare, and that is enough for them; as we might say, it fits in with the logic of the myth.

This casual attitude to the myth is due to the fact that the natives attach little importance to it in comparison with the observance it seeks to explain. For the myth is simply a formulation of the idea that the fowl taboo is the fundamental symbol of the social definition of Namoos. Everywhere within the social ambit of the Tallensi, and at all times, Namoos are those who are subject to distinctive ritual and moral restrictions in virtue of their agnatic descent; and amongst these the fowl taboo is crucial. That is how others think of Namoos, and that is how they themselves visualize their social identity. Through these observances the individual identifies himself in thought and feeling with the fraternity of clans of which his own is a part and, what is of equal significance, with the dead but still regnant forebears.

The anonymity of the ancestor in the myth shows that he stands for the prototype of all the ancestors who must necessarily have gone before in order that the present generation of men should exist, and to whom the living owe their whole social order. It is a notion entirely in keeping with the ideas underlying the kinship system of the Tallensi. But for the intervention of the fowl, says the myth, the Namoo stock might never have come into existence; and the taboo which commemorates that event came into being with the birth of their stock, which was at the same time the birth of their role in society. All Namoos, it must be remembered, are concerned with their totemic observances; for those who are themselves exempt from them have this privilege only because they are the brothers or sisters of individuals who are compelled to observe them.

The fowl taboo and the ritual observances associated with it symbolize

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

have been their founding ancestors' paternal clans. In other cases the correlation is not so clear, since the attached lineages concerned are intercalary between clans that have the same avoidances. But it is not a general rule that attached lineages preserve the avoidances of the clan of the alleged father of their founding ancestor, as can be seen from the case of Ba'at-Lakum yidem, who do not keep the Zubiuŋ taboos.

Thus Talis sometimes cite common totemic and other ritual observances as a sign of clanship ties, and at other times deny any necessary connexion between ritual observances and clanship ties. When they want to emphasize the close interdependence, or the sense of community of a particular group of clans, by contrast with other Talis or non-Talis clans, they tend to pick on common ritual observances in proof of this. But on the other hand, they are equally ready to quote peculiar totemic taboos as signs of the genealogical or social singularity of a clan or lineage. The apparent inconsistency does not worry them. For, as we have seen, Tallensi cannot visualize precisely the structure of their society in its entirety, and there is good evidence for both views in the ritual observances of the Talis. There is a tendency for some clans that are closely interconnected to have some totems in common, and for others to have different totems.

The totemic avoidances found among the clans of the Sie district in general follow the pattern found at Ba'ari; but in this area there is no close-knit nuclear aggregate of clans like the Hill Talis. The relative autonomy of the maximal lineage stands out more markedly, and there is consequently a greater diversity of totemic avoidances.

Totemic Myths

We have previously remarked that Namoos show little interest in the mythology of their totemic taboos. This attitude is characteristic of all Tallensi. Talis elders, whose authority and wisdom in ritual matters were widely respected, and who willingly gave me information of the most secret kind, were content to dismiss the question of the origin of their totemic taboos with some trite remark such as, 'We grew up to find it thus'. But here and there one comes across a myth accounting for the origin of a totemic taboo, especially in the Sie area. They are all expansions of the text 'The animal conferred a benefit on our ancestor (*u daa maal ti yaab la*)'. Though they all have the same moral, they vary greatly in substance.

Thus, according to one version, the avoidance of the tortoise and water-tortoise among the Hill Talis began in this way: 'Our (anonymous) ancestor' was suffering severely from thirst once and could find no water. He saw a tortoise crawling along and followed it. The animal reached a heap of dry leaves, which it scratched aside revealing a spring. Thereupon 'our ancestor' vowed that never again would he or his descendants eat the tortoise; and as the water-tortoise is merely another species of the same family, this taboo naturally extends to it as well.

According to another version, which is worth quoting as an example of the variations in these myths, 'our ancestor' was on a journey and was

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

held up by an impassable river. He noticed a water-tortoise descending the bank, and followed it. Thus he was led to a ford, which enabled him to cross. Thereupon he vowed that he and his descendants would refrain from eating this animal and its brother species, the tortoise.

Similar myths are current among other clans that taboo aquatic animals. Thus one of the segments of Sie have the special avoidance of the crocodile in addition to the usual fowl avoidance of the Namoos. The head of this segment told me the following myth in explanation. There was a communal fish drive, during which their ancestor, Layɪn, disappeared. He was given up for lost, and next day a party was dispatched to search for the body. But when they reached the river, they found him sitting on the bank with a crocodile at his feet. He told them that the crocodile had saved his life (*fa u ŋovor bah*) by holding him down and covering him up. Hence he vowed that he and his descendants would never again eat crocodile.

In the same way the elders of Gban narrate that 'their ancestor' was suffering with a swollen hand. He asked friends to lance it, but they thought this was unnecessary. Then one day, as he sat resting his hand on his head because of the pain, a large grasshopper of a species with sharply serrated legs (*saŋkaan*) landed on it. The ancestor scared it away. As it leaped off, it kicked out and ripped the skin of the festering hand with its saw-edged legs. This let out the accumulated pus and cured the hand. Thereupon the ancestor vowed, in the phrase that usually concludes these myths, 'May he grow old with his grandson, but no descendant of his should ever again eat the *saŋkaan* (*ɔn kɔrəgən ni u yaaya, ka ɔn bii ku le di saŋkaan*)'.

Other myths of this kind relate how the anonymous ancestor was saved from an enemy about to slay him by the opportune appearance of the totemic animal. Thus, according to one of the elders of Sawalɔg: 'Bows were in conflict (*tap ndaa yme*)', ('Perhaps', he added, as an afterthought, 'there was a fight with Mamprusi who came to raid for slaves') 'and our ancestor fled, seeking refuge in an animal's burrow. The enemy was about to break open the burrow when a squirrel (*sinsɛrəg*) darted past. They turned to pursue it, and left our ancestor. Thereupon, he vowed never to eat the squirrel again, neither he nor his descendants.'

As this sample of totemic myths shows, the pattern is the same as that of the Namoo myth accounting for the fowl avoidance. They are more unstable in content, however. The two versions of the tortoise myth were obtained from two equally authoritative elders of the same clan. There is, indeed, always an element of speculation, or of *ad hoc* construction, in these myths. Listening to them one often has the feeling that they are being elaborated by logical deduction. The starting-point is the premiss that the totemic avoidance was due to a vow made by 'our ancestor' in gratitude for an extraordinary service that saved his life. The process of reasoning is to deduce an action on the part of the animal consistent with its known peculiarities of appearance and of behaviour. Informants are never able to tell one where and when they first heard these myths. They say vaguely: 'We heard them from our fathers.' This method of reasoning, however, is congenial to the Tallensi. It forms the

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

basis, for instance, of their technique of divination, which depends on rapid and spontaneous inference from stereotyped signs and symbols.

These myths provide yet another illustration of the indifference of the Tallensi to the origins of their customs. The emphasis in their culture is on conduct, not on creed; on performance rather than on doctrine. At the same time, these myths express, as we have previously noted, the basic postulate of Tale philosophy—that the ancestors are the *fons et origo* of their whole social order—and they show also how the natives visualize their totemic taboos as symbols of the moral and ritual bonds imposed by agnatic descent.

The Totemic Avoidances of the Talis as a Reflex of the Social Structure

We can now resume our analysis of the relationship of Talis ritual observances to the social structure. We have considered certain funeral rites and totemic avoidances as the chief indices of structural differentiation. We have seen that they are not, as the natives sometimes imply, hard-and-fast criteria. They mark off the Talis cluster from the Namoos in a broad way, but reflect the overlapping between them which our study of the clanship system has brought out. And among the Talis themselves, though there is a considerable congruence between genealogical grouping as determined by the canon of agnatic descent and distinctive ritual observances, it is not a one-to-one relationship.

The funeral customs and totemic taboos we have reviewed have one feature in common which helps to explain why the natives think of them as indices of social differentiation. They are tied to the agnatic line, passed on from father to child just like membership of the lineage. They owe their binding force to the fact that they were, according to native belief, instituted by the ancestors of the lineage or clan. Hence arises a significant common element, the oath associated with the observance. Breach of the ritual observance or using the oath falsely is blasphemy against the ancestors.

We pick up this thread again in another sphere of the ritual system of the Talis. It is a common opinion in Taleland that the taboos against eating the tortoise and water-tortoise are specially characteristic of the Hill Talis. And the reason always given for this is that these taboos are connected with the Talis cult of the External *Bɔyar*. Among the Hill Talis, if a child transgresses the taboo (*galəm kihər*) by eating of the forbidden animal, its father 'pays' (*yɔ*) a fowl to the External *Bɔyar* of which his clan is an adherent. The fowl is sacrificed at the *Bɔyar*, with apologies for the transgression and pleas for the child's future well-being. A fine is thus paid to annul the trespass, and the smallness of the fine is evidence that the trespass is not considered serious.

As a rule, the group of clans and maximal lineages forming the congregation of a particular External *Bɔyar* all have the same avoidances. Thus, all the units that owe ritual allegiance to Bona'ab, the External *Bɔyar* of Kpata'ar and its associated lineages, taboo the tortoise and the water-tortoise. Hence, individuals who are the spiritual wards of Bona'ab may not eat these animals, and, if they belong to other clans or other

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

members of his inner lineage, at what he called the deliberate flouting of his rights as *biiraan*, owner of the child. A long squabble between the two lineages followed which eventually petered out in a compromise. This may seem a storm in a teacup; it was taken very seriously by a dozen Tale elders.

The outstanding example of the retention of patrilineal rights is found in the case of a girl who grows up at her *ahəb yiri*. Whatever her personal relations with her father's lineage may be, it is they who receive the placation gifts and the bride-price when she marries. The *ahəb*'s share is only the 'cow of rearing'.

Cases of girls living as foster children at their *ahəb yiri* up to marriageable age are uncommon. I knew of only one girl who was living with her *ahəb* and would probably not be taken back by her father's people before she reached marriageable age. A girl living with her mother's brother is usually there because she was sent to her maternal grandmother in early childhood owing to the death of her mother. She may be left there until she is 11 or 12, but she is then generally fetched by her father's people. A boy has more freedom. He cannot be forced to return to his paternal home if he does not wish to do so.

An interesting reflection of the conventional ideas on the relations of an *ahəb* and his foster *ahəŋ* is found in the story commonly told of how certain politico-ritual offices came to be transferred from one clan to another. The tale is so stereotyped that it can be regarded as a standard myth. It is alleged of several of the lesser chiefships that they were originally vested in different clans from those that now hold them—usually clans that are closely related to the present holders by local or ritual ties. The last chief of the original line, the myth relates, had his sister's son, a member of the clan now holding the chiefship, living with him. The chief put great trust in his *ahəŋ*; and, either because he had no sons or because his sons were indifferent to politico-ritual affairs, the chief always delegated his *ahəŋ* to represent him. Thus, he used to send the *ahəŋ* as his messenger whenever he had to communicate with the senior chief who was the elector to that chiefship. In this way the *ahəŋ* became known to the elector. When his *ahəb* died he hastened stealthily to the elector with the news, taking lavish gifts along with him. Knowing him so well from their previous contacts and persuaded by the rich gifts he brought, the elector thereupon immediately conferred the chiefship on him. Thus the chiefship came into the possession of its present holders. A similar story is told to explain the dominant position of the lineage of Lakum yiri in the politico-ritual structure of Ba'ari, in spite of their being an attached lineage.[1]

When it is pointed out that such actions are contrary to custom and would not be allowed at present, the natives have two answers. Firstly, they say, unscrupulous people never hesitate to break a customary rule

[1] *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 88.